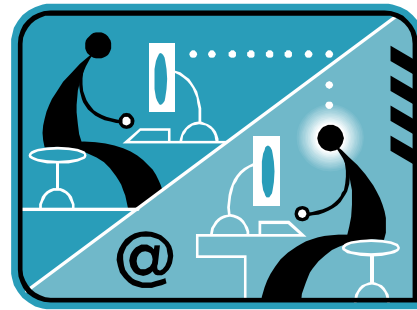


## Checklist for Evaluating Online Information

These few questions may help to guide your critique of a math website.

- What are the main sections of this website?
- Briefly describe the contents of the site.
- Did this website have any practical suggestions for teachers (students, leaders)? If yes, please give an example.
- If the website had links, were they working? How did the links promote further learning?
- What was a strength of this website for you?
- What was a weakness of this website?
- Would you recommend this website to another teacher? Why or Why not? Please explain.



The next page contains a set of questions that have been used with secondary mathematics classes ...

# Checklist for Evaluating Online Information

As you navigate the Internet and retrieve information for your class assignments and research papers, it is important to question the truthfulness of this information. Is it trustworthy? Where did it come from? Who wrote it? Why did they write it?

This checklist will help you in your quest to be sure that all of the information you obtain from the online world is "good" and useful in your studies.

## ■ What is the source of the information?

Many times, a site's address will provide some clues. A legitimate information provider will have a straightforward online address, Such as **<http://www.microsoft.com>**. On the other hand, an individual user will have an online address reading something like **<http://www.xyz.com/~smith/position.html>**. The ~smith part of the address gives it away. In this case, an individual named Smith has put Web pages in his or her personal directory, and made their contents available to the world.

## ■ Why is this information online?

Authors put information online for a reason. Ask yourself if the purpose is to inform and educate Internet users about a particular topic, or if there is some kind of hidden agenda.

## ■ Who wrote the information, and what is the point of view of the writer?

These are the two most telling questions. If you've never heard of the author or if the information wasn't well written, chances are you should do more research into his or her background before accepting the information as factual. Go to an Internet search engine (such as **<http://www.google.com>**) and type in the author's name. What comes up? What else have they published? Check the library to see if this person has published anything in the print world.

## ■ Does the online information contain links to other sites, and do they reveal any biases of the author?

Following the links online authors place inside their online information is one of the best ways to discover more about the author. These links may also reveal any biases of an author.

## ■ How recent is the information?

While new information is not necessarily any more accurate than old information, this is

still an important question to answer. If you're doing a report on the current state of the former Soviet Union (or the solution of Fermat's Last Theorem), avoid any information that was put on the Internet before 1991.

Other questions to ask:

■ Who is the main audience for this information?

■ When was the site/information last updated?

■ How does this site compare with others that deal with the same subject matter?

■ Does the text follow basic rules of grammar spelling, and literary composition? Is the typesetting of mathematical symbols up to textbook quality?

■ How knowledgeable is the individual or group on the subject matter of the site?

■ Is contact information for the author or producer included in the document so you can e-mail the person with questions or comments?

■ What is the value of the Web site in comparison to the range of library resources available on the topic you're researching?

■ Does the author of the online information cite his or her sources in the document so you can check them for authenticity?